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Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf

Managers and Ministers: Instilling Christian Free Enterprise in the Postwar Workplace

This article examines the early industrial chaplain movement. In the midst of a postwar religious revival, companies, primarily in the South, hired Protestant ministers to care for their workers' spiritual needs. Many were motivated by both religious convictions and the desire to build a productive, loyal workforce. The opposition of unions and liberal Protestantism slowed the movement's growth, although over the last three decades thousands of employers have rediscovered the benefits of faith-based workplace programs. This article illuminates important postwar trends such as the persistence of paternalism and the importance of religion in managerial strategies.

For three years beginning in 1948, the Stove Mounters International Union of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) waged a sustained campaign to organize the Dearborn Stove Company of Dallas, Texas. A series of certification elections testified to the union's slow but steady progress towards winning the workers' allegiance; in the 1950 election, management prevailed by just a single vote. As management wrestled with the union, company officials became convinced that the workers' discontent was unrelated to wages, benefits, or working conditions, but grew from the firm's failure to satisfy its employees' noneconomic needs. Casting about for a means to improve labor-management relations, in February 1951 the company hired J. Gordon Peterson to serve as the firm's industrial chaplain. An ordained Protestant clergyman, Peterson began a typical day by leading devotional services on the shop floor. During the rest of the day, Peterson circulated through the plant, talking informally or offering counseling and private prayer sessions with workers who struggled with problems ranging from domestic difficulties to annoying foremen. Peterson also demonstrated the company's concern by visiting sick or injured employees and their families in their homes or at hospitals and occasionally performing marriage ceremonies

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or funerals for workers who had no other religious connections. Peterson's message to the Dearborn workers was, "If men are willing to acknowledge a vital faith in God, and act in accordance, it will positively shorten the length and narrow the breadth of the tables where they sit down to discuss and negotiate."[1]

The company's investment in improved human relations appeared to pay off. In 1952, a year into Peterson's industrial ministry, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) held yet another election. This time management won a resounding two-to-one victory against the union. Three years after hiring their industrial chaplain, the company's vice president of production happily reported that the results of the program "have been excellent, from both a spiritual and an economic point of view."[2] The Dearborn Company was one of dozens of companies in the 1940s and 1950s that hired Protestant ministers to care for the spiritual needs of their workers. Moreover, a widespread interest in industrial chaplains among both church and industry groups made the prospects for its further growth promising. Enthusiasts predicted that industrial chaplains would soon be as common as company doctors or social workers.[3]

From the vantage of the early twenty-first century, this movement appears to have fulfilled expectations. Historian Chad Seales cites just a few examples: in 2010, Tyson Foods, which defines itself as a "faith-friendly company" that strives to "honor God," employed 120 part-time chaplains in seventy-seven production facilities; the Dallas-based Marketplace Chaplains (created in 1984) has supplied 2,482 chaplains to companies employing over 500,000 workers in 850 cities, while the Raleigh-based Corporate Chaplains of America has an even more

[1] Francis K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain—His Employee and Community Relations Significance" (master's thesis, Boston University, 1956), 42–43; J. Gordon Peterson, "A Foundation for the Roof," typescript report, n.d., box 26, RG 10, National Council of Churches Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia (hereafter NCC).

[2] F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 44; "Religion in Industry," unpublished report, c. 1954, box 158, J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del. (hereafter HPP).

[3] With the exception of a short, suggestive piece by Chad Seales, which ends with a call for more research on industrial chaplaincy, the movement has received little attention from historians. It is mentioned briefly in works by Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Darren Dochuck, and Sarah Hammond's dissertation examines the National Association of Evangelicals' effort to promote industrial chaplaincy immediately after World War II. Chad E. Seales, "Corporate Chaplaincy and the American Workplace," *Religion Compass* 6, no. 3 (2012): 195–203; Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism* (Urbana, 1994), 224–25; Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York, 2011); Sarah Ruth Hammond, "'God's Business Men': Entrepreneurial Evangelicals in Depression and War" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010); Clarence Woodbury, "Religion in Industry: 'Not Only to Make a Living . . . but a Life,'" *Nation's Business*, June 1954, 74.

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expansive vision.[4] But contemporary business enthusiasm for workplace ministers obscures the struggles among church, business, and labor groups that characterized the early industrial chaplain movement and its significance in illuminating postwar industrial relations.

The initial industrial chaplain programs arose during a spiritual turn taken by employers and business leaders during a particularly tumultuous time in the history of American capitalism. Other scholars—Bethany Moreton, Darren Dochuk, Kimberly Phillips-Fein—have noted the political uses of the corporate embrace of evangelical religion, especially in contesting New Deal liberalism and promoting a vision of an antistatist, free-enterprise capitalism.[5] But this literature downplays the role that employers envisioned for ministers within the factory. Defying the notion of a labor-capital accord that supposedly governed postwar workplaces, management moved aggressively to contain organized labor and to restore management control over the shop floor. Employers used a variety of methods, including plant relocation, overt antiunion campaigns, and sophisticated managerial techniques, such as human relations, to reshape the workplace.[6] Religion was yet another important component. The idea for "ministers with their sleeves rolled up" began amid the conflicts generated by the enormous dislocations of wartime production.[7] Inspired by military chaplains, some churches and employers set up experimental chaplaincies to calm situations where the racial and gendered recomposition of the workforce threatened to explode and disrupt essential production. Initially, however, chaplains also worked closely with unions. Workplace chaplaincies provided ministers with a unique opportunity for direct contact with labor and posed new possibilities for church-labor relations in the postwar era.[8] Such flexibility soon

[4] Seales, "Corporate Chaplaincy, 195."

[5] Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York, 2009); E. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*; Hammond, "'God's Business Men'"; Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*; Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009).

[6] For some of the most important works on the limitations of the concept of the "labor-capital accord," see Howell Harris, *The Right to Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940s* (Madison, Wis., 1982); E. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*; Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, 2002); Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1999).

[7] Jesse Cavileer, "Report on a Field Study of Industrial Chaplaincy," typescript report, n.d., box 1572, John Ramsay Papers, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta (hereafter JRP); Richard Poethig, "Marshall Logan Scott and the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 83 (Spring/Summer 2005): 5–22.

[8] Thomas Doyle, "The Industrial Chaplaincy," Religious News Service (typed newsletter), 18 Mar. 1944, box 2, folder 1, RG 301.6, Board of National Missions Papers, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia (hereafter BNM); Chester F. Underhill to Harlan M. Frost, 19 Oct. 1943, box 2, folder 1, RG 301.6, BNM; Cavileer, "Field Study of Industrial Chaplaincy."

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disappeared. Perceptive postwar employers recognized the untapped potential of using clergy to quell the unrest from workforces that had expectations stoked by union promises. While clergy worried about the effect of the war on their relations with the working class, employers feared losing control of the shop floor. Millions of new workers had surged into unions and an emboldened, more powerful labor movement threatened precious managerial rights. Postwar plans for organizing drives in regions lightly touched by organized labor, especially the South, posed yet another challenge to a nervous business community.[9]

Employers who hoped to exploit the promise of industrial chaplains to recapture workplace control after World War II discovered a range of factors that complicated their goals. First, the Protestant churches most likely to supply chaplains were in turmoil as a resurgent fundamentalism challenged the social outlook of mainline denominations. New conservative evangelical associations emerged to contest liberal theology. Second, debates raged over the objectives of industrial chaplains. Was their primary purpose to Christianize workers, or were they to be counselors promoting a therapeutic brand of religion that complemented new human relations strategies and the insights gained from industrial psychology?[10] Finally, industrial chaplains confronted the various cultures of the workers. Some were skeptical of the moralizing sentiments of workplace religion, particularly when it conflicted with or undermined their own beliefs. Especially in unionized or unionizing workplaces, workers were also deeply suspicious of industrial chaplains who appeared to be doing the bidding of the company. Of course, one of the ironies of organized labor's hostility to industrial chaplains meant that when employers began hiring new chaplains in the 1970s, the more liberal versions of the movement were nowhere to be found.

This article will survey the origins and goals of industrial chaplains during World War II as well as the limitations of the movement amid the contentious industrial relations climate of the postwar decade. We believe that the industrial chaplain movement suggests a good deal about postwar American manufacturers, particularly their efforts to link the revitalization of Protestantism to free-enterprise capitalism. As employers sought to reclaim control over the shop floor, which they believed had been eroded by unions and government, they turned to

[9] Harris, *The Right to Manage*; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*; Robert H. Zieger and Gilbert J. Gall, *American Workers, American Unions: The Twentieth Century* (Baltimore, 2002), 104–43.

[10] On postwar human relations, see Richard Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge: A History of the Hawthorne Experiments* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), and James Hoopes, *False Prophets: The Gurus Who Created Modern Management and Why Their Ideas Are Bad for Business Today* (New York, 2003), 97–99, 143–33, 161–67.

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deeply embedded cultural norms, like religion, as important tools. Industrial chaplains need to be understood as a cultural strategy that complemented plant relocation and political mobilization for postwar business.[11] Finally, the character of industrial chaplains today owes a great deal to the struggles over the movement during its first decade.

Origins of the Industrial Chaplain Movement

The connection between religion and the workplace has deep roots. In the early nineteenth century, the Calvinist virtues of industry and frugality meshed well with efforts to instill discipline in a new factory workforce, leading New England textile mill owners to build churches close to their factories and encourage employees' attendance. At the century's end, business leaders in hundreds of cities and towns sponsored evangelists Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday to spread the message to workers that Christian piety, sobriety, and individual self-help were the solutions to society's economic and social problems. When the textile industry moved south, newly built mill villages commonly featured company-owned churches and mill-subsidized ministers who helped forge labor discipline by preaching a gospel of salvation through work. In the early twentieth century, Christianity reinforced programs of welfare capitalism by promoting values that employers found desirable in their workers, including temperance, frugality, discipline, loyalty to the company, and independence from unions. Some firms literally brought religion to the shop floor by supporting Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Association (YMCA, YWCA) industrial branches and welcoming their noontime, shop-floor bible classes.[12]

Such manifestations of employer-sanctioned shop-floor religion diminished after World War I. By 1929 the YMCA had disbanded its Industrial Department, and the Depression of the thirties led many employers to jettison their programs of welfare capitalism. Economic hard times also struck at the heart of southern textile paternalism. New Deal legislation helped contribute to a decline of the mill villages, which meant that

[11] On industrial restructuring, see Cowie, *Capital Moves*. There is a growing literature on the political mobilization of business after World War II and its contribution to conservatism, including most recently Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, and Moreton, *God and Wal-Mart*, but also Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, 2001).

[12] Ken Fones-Wolf, *Trade Union Gospel: Christianity and Labor in Industrial Philadelphia, 1865–1915* (Philadelphia, 1989), 184–90; Robert F. Martin, *Hero of the Heartland: Billy Sunday and the Transformation of American Society, 1862–1935* (Bloomington, 2002), 45–63; Stuart D. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880–1940* (Chicago, 1976), 69–70; Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Workingmen, 1877–1920* (Chicago, 2002), 119–24.

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employers in the future would have less direct influence over their employees' religious life. In much of the country, the ties between business and religion weakened as mainstream Protestant denominations, struggling to maintain their legitimacy in the face of widespread privation, distanced themselves from a collapsed industrial capitalism. But such a separation was never complete; throughout the 1930s a small, active core of evangelical employers continued to offer a range of evangelistic programs aimed at urban workers.[13]

World War II opened the door to new church and business experiments linking the workplace and religion. The expansion of industrial production brought millions of Americans, many from rural settings and small towns, into highly congested wartime communities. New groups of workers—women, African Americans, and poor white southerners—flowed into wartime factories. Many suffered from disrupted family life, the stress of conditions in hastily built war housing developments and trailer parks, the heightened drive for productivity, and increased racial and ethnic tensions at work and in neighborhoods.[14] These changes intensified existing concerns among many mainstream Protestants that their churches were out of touch with industrial workers. They agonized that mobilization required Sunday to be treated as a "business as usual" day and worried that factory newcomers might reject mainstream Protestantism for either irreligion or more dynamic religious sects. Indeed, Holiness and Pentecostal sects were the fastest-growing churches during the Depression. Mainline Protestant leaders pushed their churches to provide aid and spiritual guidance to the "large mass of laboring people who to a large extent have remained untouched" by their message, declaring that the "time is here for the complete mobilization of the Christian Church and her affiliates for wartime service."[15]

In the effort to reach industrial workers, churches developed new missions in expanding urban centers, but these reflected growing

[13] Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism,* 141–48; Sanford M. Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Capitalism since the New Deal* (Princeton, 1997); G. C. Waldrep III, *Southern Workers and the Search for Community: Spartanburg County, South Carolina* (Urbana, 2000). Jacoby argues that welfare capitalism survived the Depression, albeit in a different form. On Protestantism in the thirties, see Robert Moats Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919–1939* (Chapel Hill, 1958); Hammond, "'God's Business Men,'" chaps. 2 and 3.

[14] John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago, 1996); William L. O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II* (New York, 1993), 201–66.

[15] F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 11; W. Glenn Roberts, "Report on the First Congress of Peoples' Institute of Applied Religion Held in Detroit," 22–24 July 1944, box 2, folder 14, RG 301.6, BNM; Cavileer, "Field Study of Industrial Chaplaincy"; Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., "War Industry Bulletin," 16 Oct. 1942, box 2, folder 8, RG 301.6, BNM.

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divisions within Protestantism. Conservative evangelicals, backed by business lay groups, mobilized to save young defense workers and GIs through youth rallies and the Youth for Christ movement.[16] Meanwhile, so anxious was the Presbyterian Church to connect to southern migrants that in 1943 the Detroit Presbytery invited Claude Williams to serve as the city's "Industrial Chaplain." Williams, who had worked with southern unions in the thirties and preached a radical form of Christianity, sought to counter the racial hatred stirred up by reactionary preachers like J. Frank Norris and Gerald L. K. Smith by sending an interracial "brotherhood squadron" to preach at storefront churches. He also tried to "convert" some of the antiunion and racist fundamentalist preachers who had come north with their congregants and taken jobs in the plants by offering classes for "work-a-day preachers."[17]

Wartime stories about the effectiveness of military chaplains, as well as the pioneering efforts of British churches in assigning clergy to minister to war-factory workers, inspired liberal religious groups. The Federal Council of Churches and the Presbyterian Church both explored opportunities to set up "experimental chaplaincies" in large industrial plants. In August 1943 the Quincy, Massachusetts, Council of Churches appointed Chester F. Underhill to serve as chaplain to workers employed in local shipyards and plants. To ensure success, the Council of Churches gained support from employers, local AFL and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions, and local Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergy.[18] To allay suspicion that Underhill was "a labor stooge or a management spy," the Quincy Council of Churches paid his salary. Underhill had an office at each of the big industrial plants and one at the downtown YMCA. He advertised his services on bulletin boards in the plants and assured workers that he was not promoting any particular denomination; "I'm trying to build the idea that I'm trying to serve God, no strings on it," he claimed. He spent most of his time providing services to workers in trouble, interceding in cases of domestic battery and

[16] Hammond, "'God's Business Men,'" 115–29; Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York, 1997), 167–70.

[17] Dr. Wilson to Mr. Roberts, 10 Nov. 1942, and T. B. Foster to Mr. Roberts, 20 Apr. 1944, both box 4, folder 10, RG 301.6, BNM; Claude Williams to Sponsors and Friends, July 1943, box 3, folder 2, Claude Williams Papers, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit (hereafter CWP); Claude Williams to J. Nelson Pyle, 15 May 1944, box 3, folder 11, CWP; Erik S. Gellman and Jarod H. Roll, *The Gospel of the Working Class: Labor's Southern Prophets in New Deal America* (Urbana, 2011).

[18] Doyle, "The Industrial Chaplaincy"; Kenneth Underwood, *Christianity Where You Live* (New York, 1945), 102–5.

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marital conflict, helping save a family from eviction, and providing moral support for workers struggling with alcoholism.[19]

In other cases, employers hired their own ministers, covering expenses with wartime cost-plus government contracts. Unlike Underhill, these chaplains often served the interests of the companies that employed them. Christian industrialist Robert G. LeTourneau established full-time industrial chaplaincies at his plants in Peoria, Illinois, Toccoa, Georgia, and Vicksburg, Mississippi. While hoping to alleviate the effects of personal problems that interfered with employee productivity, LeTourneau also felt a deep religiosity that he sought to share with his workers. Similarly, the Doehler Die Casting Company of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, which had quickly expanded its workforce from seven hundred to 3,200, turned to a local Lutheran minister to solve the plant's industrial problems, especially absenteeism.[20]

With the end of the war and its cost-plus defense contracts, many of these experimental industrial chaplaincies ended, but some people in religious and business communities remained intrigued with the concept. That Americans were looking for new ways to spread the word of God was not unusual; under the specter of atomic devastation and the spread of communism, postwar America witnessed a religious awakening. Church building and membership outpaced population growth and religion assumed a more prominent place in public life. Bible sales doubled between 1947 and 1952 and religious books often topped the best-seller lists. Interdenominational religious rallies and evangelical crusades drew tens of thousands of worshipers. In Washington, D.C., prayer breakfasts attracted prominent public officials, and presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower regularly affirmed their religious convictions. Even money was affected; Eisenhower directed that American currency carry the words "In God We Trust," a not-so-subtle reminder linking Christianity and free-enterprise capitalism.[21]

[19] Underhill to Frost, 19 Oct. 1943, BNM; reports of the Quincy Industrial Chaplain, 1 Aug. 1943 to 1 Feb. 1944, 1 Feb. to 31 July 1944, and 11 July to 12 Sept. 1944, all box 2, folder 2, RG 301.6, BNM; Chester J. Underhill to James Myers, 12 Aug. 1943, box 2, folder 2, RG 301.6, BNM.

[20] Robert V. Harrison, "The Industrial Chaplaincy at R. G. LeTourneau, Inc." (master's thesis, Bethany Nazarene College, 1970), 42–44; "A Picture Story on Industrial Chaplaincy," *Zion's Herald*, 14 Mar. 1945, 165; Hammond, "'God's Business Men,'" 46–47, 61–63; "Plant Parsons," *Business Week*, 7 Oct. 1944, 106–7.

[21] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 212–14, 144–52; Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, 1998), 16, 67; Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945: A History* (New York, 2003), 31.

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Competing Creeds

Religion's ascent in postwar America exposed sharp divisions among Protestants. In industrial chaplain programs, two major camps emerged. Liberals associated with the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) supported social action and endorsed the rights of labor to organize. They favored modernist theological trends, ecumenicalism, and a growing emphasis on pastoral counseling that many conservative clergy found disconcerting. On the other side, a resurgent fundamentalism exerted influence in a number of denominations and stressed that the church's primary goals should be the promotion of piety, personal salvation, and individual morality, not social or collective action. In 1943, religious conservatives formed an association, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), to serve as an alternative voice for American Protestantism. Much of the business community supported the conservatives and dismissed the FCC as "socialistic."[22]

From the outset, liberal and conservative Protestants envisioned different models of industrial chaplaincy. In 1946, liberals in the FCC held a series of meetings, culminating in a conference in New York City where the future of industrial chaplaincy was discussed. They attempted to define the goals and duties of the position and the relationship of chaplains with management and organized labor. One of their basic assumptions was that chaplains would work in a unionized environment. The churchmen recommended that industrial chaplains should be specially trained ministers who would engage in both personal counseling (pastoral work) and evangelical outreach, and that the chaplains should operate under interdenominational sponsorship and obtain financial support equally from unions, employers, and churches. While all the groups would have a voice in shaping the program, industrial chaplains should "clearly represent the church" and "avoid identification with either labor or management."[23]

The FCC conference was highly critical of the industrial chaplain model championed by the NAE, in which chaplains worked exclusively for management and espoused a fundamentalist religious approach.[24] The NAE's National Commission on Industrial Chaplaincies, formed in 1944, had close ties to the business community, with eight of the

[22] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 144–52; Hammond, "'God's Business Men,'" chap. 4.

[23] Thomas B. Foster to Cameron P. Hall, 27 June 1946, box 2, folder 1, RG 301.6, BNM; "Notes on Informal Conference on Industrial Chaplaincy," 16 May 1946, and Cameron P. Hall to Dear Chaplain, 27 Aug. 1946, both box 46, folder 17, RG 18, Federal Council of Churches Records, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia (hereafter FCC); "Industrial Chaplains: A Memorandum," n.d., box 1572, folder 196, JRP.

[24] "Informal Conference," 16 May 1946, FCC; "Are Evangelicals Being Taken for a Ride?" *Christian Century*, 16 May 1945, 597.

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eleven members being officers of manufacturing firms. In late 1945, the NAE established Chaplain Counselors for Industry, which provided recruiting, training, and placement services for industrial chaplains and training seminars at Wheaton College, an evangelical center. The seminars offered courses in industrial psychology, personnel administration, and industrial "theopsychotherapy," which promised to foster "higher personal integration and spiritual adjustment of workers." Chaplain Counselors for Industry hoped that this training would make its chaplains attractive not only to Christian employers but also to less religiously oriented managers who were seeking innovative ways to improve management-labor relations. The NAE emphasized that industrial evangelism could serve the interests of the church and free enterprise simultaneously, helping to "dissolve some of the causes of industrial unrest" by presenting "Christ as the cure."[25]

In the decade after World War II, the FCC model of industrial chaplaincy languished, as the Federal Council found it difficult to gain the simultaneous cooperation of labor and management.[26] For example, in 1946 the Ohio Diocese of the Episcopal Church appointed Francis D. Sayre, a former naval chaplain, to minister to workers in several large industrial plants in Cleveland, but joint support from unions and companies failed to materialize. Newark, New Jersey, however, initially offered a somewhat more promising liberal model. It originated during World War II when Anthony A. Montero was doing double duty, studying at a local seminary and working at the Barnett Foundry. When wartime demands forced the company to require Sunday work, the fledgling minister asked permission to hold nonsectarian lunchtime church services. By the war's end, Montero had completed his theological education and the Presbyterian Synod of New Jersey, recognizing Montero's "zeal for the spread of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ among working people," appointed the burly preacher, who could talk the "language of the laboring man," as full-time industrial chaplain (Figure 1). By 1947 he was conducting noontime services once or twice a month in eleven

[25] *United Evangelical Action*, June 1944, 1, and 3 Mar. 1945, 1; National Association of Evangelicals, Executive Committee meeting minutes, 13 Nov. 1945, 1–2, Oct., box 90, National Association of Evangelicals Papers, Billy Graham Center Archives, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill. (hereafter cited as NAE); Ernest L. Chase to John Ramsey, 26 Nov. 1945, box 1572, JRP; Information for Industrial Chaplain Candidates by Chaplain Counselors for Industry (typed report, n.d.), box 1572, JRP. See also Hammond, "'God's Business Men,'" 247–62; National Association of Evangelicals, *Advance: Onward from Omaha: Report of the 5th Annual Convention of the NAE, Omaha, Nebraska, April 14–17, 1947,* box 1A, NAE. By 1949 the NAE had given up its industrial chaplaincy program, although members remained interested in the concept and sought to revive it in the late fifties (Donald H. Gill to Henry Brandt, 3 Aug. 1955, box 53, NAE).

[26] Jean Spencer Felton, "Religious Activities in Industry," *Industrial Medicine and Surgery*, June 1958, 267.

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Plans for factory Gospel services, made by Tony and his boss, in March 1942 were later adopted by the Church.

Tony Montero helps both the workers and the employers solve their problems and differences with impartiality.

Industrial chaplaincy has not changed Tony's friendly manner of lunching with workers on factory's payroll.

Not bounded by factory walls, Tony Montero makes the "house and hospital" calls of the average clergyman.

FEBRUARY 28, 1948

15

Figure 1. Anthony A. Montero, industrial chaplain at the Barnett Foundry. (Source: Francis Hewens, "The Factory Is His Parish," *Presbyterian Life*, 28 Feb. 1948, 14. Courtesy of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church [USA], Philadelphia, Pa.)

plants. Union officials, white-collar workers, and supervisors routinely joined production workers in attendance. Before and after services, Montero moved around the plants, talking to workers, and outside the plant he called on the sick at home or in the hospital. Finally, in 1951, his church duties forced him to split the workload with two other ministers, neither of whom was as effective as Montero, and interest declined.[27]

[27] E. Lansing Bennett, "Pulpits in Industry," *The City Church*, Nov. 1952, 10–12; Francis Hewens, "The Factory Is His Parish," *Presbyterian Life*, 28 Feb. 1948, 13–15; Edward A. Morris, "The Church's Ministry to Labor in the Synod of New Jersey," unpublished report, Sept. 1955, box 13, accession 1412, National Association of Manufacturers Records, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del. (hereafter NAM).

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The employer vision of industrial chaplains was more successful. In 1954, *Nation's Business* estimated that forty companies had hired clergy to provide for the spiritual and emotional needs of their workers. At least fourteen companies employed ministers on a full-time basis, including R. J. Reynolds, Fieldcrest Mills, Texas Aluminum Company, D-X Sunray Oil, American Air Filter, Lone Star Steel, and R. G. LeTourneau. Others retained chaplains on a part-time basis or, like Swift & Co. of Kansas City, gave a Baptist minister who also worked as a mechanic time off to counsel the plant's unionized workers. A broad range of industries employed chaplains, including heavy equipment, steel, oil, textiles, and tobacco, but most firms were nonunion. Moreover, the companies that made the largest financial commitment for full-time chaplains were located in the South. This is not surprising given that industrial chaplaincy was a Protestant phenomenon and that the South tended to be an overwhelmingly Protestant region. The chaplains there represented a variety of denominations, although Methodists and Baptists were most common. Equally as important, the region had the nation's largest block of unorganized workers and faced a vigorous union-organizing drive.[28]

Sacred and Practical Motives

Industrial chaplaincies were but one, although admittedly the most intense, manifestation of religion in the workplace. Companies invested in religious literature and welcomed on-the-job religious services. *Nation's Business* estimated that eight hundred firms disseminated religious literature among their workers. Industry leaders, like U.S. Steel and General Motors, distributed *Guideposts*, Norman Vincent Peale's inspirational monthly that mixed anticommunism, individualism, and free enterprise with "practical Christianity."[29] Equally common were workplace prayer gatherings, which skyrocketed after World War II. In 1950, General Electric gained national attention when it began special Holy Week services at its Schenectady, New York, works. Several years later, the *Christian Advocate* observed that "prayer time on company time is coming into fashion in industries across the country," describing examples in such far-flung cities as Indianapolis, Saginaw, Michigan,

[28] Woodbury, "Religion in Industry," 30; Felton, "Religious Activities in Industry," 263–64; "More Firms Retain Ministers to Advise, Comfort Employees," *Wall Street Journal*, 3 Mar. 1959; Paul John Thielo, "The Industrial Chaplain" (bachelor's thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1956); F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain"; Garwin Edison Burke, "A Consideration of the Ordained Christian Minister Serving within the Industrial Plant" (master's thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1955).

[29] Woodbury, "Religion in Industry," 30; Carol V. R. George, *God's Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale and the Power of Positive Thinking* (New York, 1993), 103–14.

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and Knoxville, Tennessee. In 1953, Dallas, Texas, employers reported that twenty-five businesses in the city allowed religious services and prayer meetings in their workplaces.[30]

A complex mix of motives underscored this phenomenon. In part it was a reflection of the postwar religious revival. Contemporaries found evidence of a "spiritual awakening" within the business community. In 1952, L. J. Fletcher, a Caterpillar Company vice president, asserted, "There can be no doubt as to the growing appreciation on the part of industrial management of what might be called the spiritual values of life as they affect all phases of modern living." The following year, *Iron Age* noted that "it was time for each industrial company to appoint a vice president in charge of souls." Others pointed to groups like Christ Bearers of Pittsburgh, the Fishermen's Club of Des Moines, Iowa, Businessmen for Religious Action of Nashville, Tennessee, and the fifty-five chapters of the Christian Business Men's Committee in California, each of which spoke of applying Christian principles to industrial and community problems.[31]

For many of these employers, strong religious convictions influenced their decision to hire an industrial chaplain. The John E. Mitchell Company of Dallas, which hired a chaplain in 1949, had an "intense desire" to see its employees brought "into the right relationship with God." That same year, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company President John C. Whitaker, a devout Episcopalian, hired a chaplain, explaining that he was convinced that a "basic spiritual faith" would "give meaning and direction" to his workers' lives.[32] Chaplains, too, emphasized the religious benefits of a workplace ministry that gave them a unique access to working people, especially non-Christians. Chaplain Marc Burbridge noted that he could "win the respect and confidence of men and women who would never, in the ordinary walks of life, approach a priest or minister for counseling."[33]

Perhaps the most fervent advocate of bringing Christianity into the business world was Robert G. LeTourneau, a manufacturer of earth-moving equipment and, later, offshore drilling rigs. A believer in the

[30] "Plant Religious Program," *Trends*, Sept. 1950, 4–5; "In Industry: Prayer on Company Time," *Christian Advocate*, 1 Sept. 1955, 17; "Report of the Committee on Religion in Industry to the Annual Meeting of the Executive Committee of United Churchmen" and attached "Religion in Industry Report," 1 Apr. 1954, box 158, HPP.

[31] L. J. Fletcher to E. Urner Goodman, 5 Nov. 1952, box 26, folder 51, RG 10, NCC; "Religion in Business," *Iron Age*, 5 Mar. 1953, 25; Duncan Norton-Taylor, "Businessmen on Their Knees," *Fortune*, Oct. 1953, 247; Woodbury, "Religion in Industry," 29–31, 74–77.

[32] Harrison, "Industrial Chaplaincy at R. G. LeTourneau," 30.

[33] Mark Burbridge and Barry Walker responses, in "Industrial Chaplain Counselor Questionnaires for Survey Materials," forms compiled by Chaplain Charlie Martin, 2 Dec. 1957, box 53, NAE.

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literal word of the Bible, LeTourneau attributed his success in industry to his "business partnership with God." In 1932, he vowed to give 90 percent of his profits and much of his time to religion. Shortly afterwards, he established the LeTourneau Foundation, which contributed millions of dollars each year to churches, schools, and scholarships and published religious tracts, sponsored revivals, and ran religious camps for children. On weekends, LeTourneau flew in his own plane to attend religious meetings or to preach "fire and brimstone" sermons in churches throughout the nation, averaging six engagements each weekend. In 1933, LeTourneau first introduced religious services into his factories; ten years later an executive estimated that these services cost the company $12,000 a month in employee time at the Peoria, Illinois, plant alone. As the company grew, it dedicated each new plant to the Lord with revivals featuring music, preachers, and barbecue for thousands of guests. Banners adorned work sites with slogans reminding workers, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." In 1941 LeTourneau began hiring full-time chaplains. "By this method," he wrote, "we are able to give every day encouragement for the weak, instruction for the ignorant, consolation for the bereaved, and fellowship for the strong." It was his belief "that in fulfilling this sacred trust, still more lives shall be touched and the power of God shall become more real to those who turn the wheels of our great industries."[34]

Yet even the most religious employers were not immune to the tangible business benefits promised by Christian free-enterprise capitalism. Like their nineteenth-century counterparts, mid-twentieth-century managers hoped that a pious, morally upright workforce would be more productive and loyal. Motivating and controlling their workers were long-standing goals of employers. At the end of World War II, an aggressive labor movement and a more activist state made many managers feel increasingly insecure about their ability to control the shop floor and expect their workers' loyalty to free enterprise. Labor's ranks increased during the war from 10 to 15 million, covering nearly 80 percent of workers in some basic industries. In 1946, a confident labor movement targeted the nation's last bastion of antiunionism, the South. Moreover, managers pushing for greater productivity were frustrated by union work rules and grievance systems that limited management's discretionary power.[35]

[34] Beverly Smith, "God's Chief Engineer," *American Magazine*, June 1946, 100, 102; Rufus Jarman, "LeTourneau: America's Most Spectacular Maker of Earth-Moving Machines Is 'In Partnership with God,'" *Life*, 16 Oct. 1944, 50, 52; Albert W. Lorimer, *God Runs My Business: The Story of R. G. LeTourneau* (New York, 1941), 88–91, 143; Amy Porter, "God's Partner," *Collier's*, 25 Dec. 1943, 36, 75–76; F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 26.

[35] E. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*; Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, chap. 2.

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The emphasis on religion at work also dovetailed nicely with another postwar managerial initiative, human relations. The human relations movement, which emerged from the Hawthorne experiments conducted by Elton Mayo and his associates in the mid-1920s, found a role for industrial chaplains. Its advocates emphasized the link between productivity and workers' social and psychological satisfaction on the job. Human relations programs taught supervisors therapeutic skills—especially the importance of interacting with workers as individuals rather than treating them collectively—to promote employee satisfaction.[36] Similarly, industrial chaplain programs sought to put management front and center in responding to workers' needs. In some cases, employers hired clinical psychologists or used personality tests and training programs to encourage foremen to give employees individual recognition and to demonstrate the company's concern for workers' problems. In other companies, chaplains performed the roles of offering troubled employees counseling on both on-the-job and off-the-job problems in the effort to promote good personal adjustment and to remove deterrents to maximum worker effectiveness. While firms also used bulletin boards, letters to employees' homes, and company magazines to build employee identity with the company, personal contact was by far the most effective method.[37]

Industrial chaplaincy, then, was in part a spiritually motivated program linked to this effort to build and retain a productive and loyal workforce. Even a proselytizing, evangelical executive like R. G. LeTourneau asserted that a genuine Christian "will make a better man and a better workman than if you do not have Jesus Christ in your heart."[38] Believing that "an individualistic application of the problems of the Christian Gospel will solve the problems of contemporary industrial society," he considered unions unnecessary and undesirable. One of his industrial chaplains observed that "Christianity is so sane, so practical, so workable, that its application brings about solutions to the unrest and turmoil that appear everywhere" in society.[39]

[36] William H. Ruffin, "Management and Government in Human Relations," address before the Blue Ridge Conference of Southern Industrial Executives, 18 July 1951, box 12, acc. 1412, Industrial Relations Department Papers, NAM; Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge*; Keith Davis, *Human Relations at Work: The Dynamics of Organizational Behavior*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1967), 38–44; Marvin Bower, *The Development of Executive Leadership* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), 41, 44.

[37] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: The Uses of Faith after Freud* (New York, 1965); E. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*, 73–86; Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge*, 237; Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, 127, 220–28.

[38] Lorimer, *God Runs My Business*, 102.

[39] Richard Charles Smith, "A Critical Evaluation of Industrial Evangelism in the United States of America" (doctor of theology diss., University of Geneva, 1959), 77; On LeTourneau's efforts to keep out unions, see Hammond, "'God's Business Men,'" 62–63; memorandum by

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That applied Christianity dovetailed with human relations was an added bonus. In 1954, a John Hancock Life Insurance executive observed that the "tremendous surge in business training with respect to human relations" had "at its core a large religious element."[40]

James A. Rowan, chairman of Group Attitudes Corporation, championed both industrial chaplaincy and human relations. His firm helped employers use human relations to build better relationships with their workers. To Rowan, the "heart of (industrial) problems" was the worker's inadequate "feelings about his own worth as a person," which resulted from the distance that had developed between managers and workers. Since Christianity involved the spiritual side of man, it could be part of the solution. Rowan pointed to his company's survey of a small Pittsburgh steel company, which found that three out of four workers who rated high in religious beliefs were considered well-adjusted by their employers, as tangible proof that "building spiritual values into work relationships" offered a way to improve workers' self-esteem and strengthen employer-employee bonds. In 1953, Rowan took over as chair of the National Council of Churches' new Religion in Industry committee, which a year later reported that "recent experiments by many companies have proved that an industrial chaplain is the answer to the need of some workmen for some type of spiritual program."[41]

George D. Heaton, a Southern Baptist minister from Charlotte, North Carolina, perhaps best personified the link between human relations and Christianity. As labor conflict exploded during the thirties, Heaton plunged into labor-management relations and became a self-taught expert in the field. In the mid-thirties, he began combining his pastoral duties with a flourishing industrial relations consulting business based primarily in the South, mostly among nonunion companies like J. P. Stevens, Burlington Mills, and Thomasville Furniture. Heaton trained foremen on practices designed to promote productivity and win worker loyalty, asserting that management's concern for workers' well-being and the quality of supervision were more important than

Lucy R. Mason, 10 Mar. 1943, and Leon Stamey to George Triedman, 22 Nov. 1950, both microfilm, reel 64, Operation Dixie Papers, Rare Books, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.

[40] Report to the Committee on Religion and Industry in Connection with the Annual Meeting of the Board of Managers of the United Church Men, St. Louis (typescript), 5–7 Nov. 1954, box 27, folder 1, NCC; L. J. Fletcher to E. Urner Goodman, 30 Oct. 1953, box 26, folder 51, RG 10, NCC.

[41] James A. Rowan, "Industry's Open Door," *Christian Laymen*, May 1953, 1–4; James Rowan to Urner Goodman, 21 Oct. 1953, and Lem T. Jones to Rev. Clifford H. Peace, 17 Aug. 1953, both box 26, folder 51, RG 10, NCC; Jane Stewart, "The Worker and His Faith," reprint from *Guideposts*, Oct. 1962, box 26, folder 12, RG 10, NCC.

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high wages.[42] Heaton viewed improving industrial relations in free-market capitalism as his Christian mission. All one needs to do, he recounted, "is to read Paul's chapter in First Corinthians on the nature of the church to realize how fundamental this is. It is the whole Christian philosophy that people must feel a part of each other."[43] Heaton believed that a sacred imperative drove human relations; the "ideal of good human relationships ought to be a shrine before which every man would bow," he asserted.[44]

Industrial Chaplains on the Shop Floor

Industrial chaplain duties typically reflected the diverse and mixed motives of employers. At times, the religious duties of the chaplain ranked behind other company goals. Some chaplains operated out of plant personnel departments and actively promoted increased productivity. The chaplain for John E. Mitchell Company even pitched in on occasion to help out a department lagging in production. In one unusual case, J. Gordon Peterson, chaplain for Texas Aluminum Company of Rockwall, Texas, served as director of personnel. Other firms emphasized their ministers' independence from company hierarchy. Occasionally, chaplains were heavily involved in public and community relations, while in other plants they worked exclusively with the employees. Counseling troubled workers was part of virtually every program. According to the *Wall Street Journal,* chaplains enjoyed the "wide respect generally accorded a man of the cloth," which separated the chaplain from other personnel workers. The "reservoir of goodwill very often" helped the "chaplain do things that other company men could not."[45] Ultimately, the motives of the employers had a significant impact on chaplains'

[42] *George D. Heaton II November 8, 1908–July 4, 1996*, pamphlet, [1996], box 1, folder 1, George D. Heaton Collection, University Archives, Auburn University, Auburn, Ala. (hereafter GHC); T. M. Forbes to Heaton, 23 July 1947, box 6, folder 38, GHC; Charles B. Wade to Heaton, 14 June 1957, box 10, folder 8, GHC; George D. Heaton, "The Road to Labor-Management Peace," typescript of a speech delivered to St. Louis Executive Club, 11 Apr. 1950, box 8, folder 64, GHC.

[43] George D. Heaton, "The Christian Answer to Good Human Relation in Business: Session II—The Secret of Cooperation" (typescript of a workshop lecture), 14 May 1956, box 2, folder 3, GHC.

[44] George D. Heaton, "The Challenge to Management," in *Industrial Relations: The Road Ahead! A Summary of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference on Human Relations in Industry, Blue Ridge, N.C., 16–19 July 1947* (The Conference, 1947), GHC. For more on Heaton, see Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, "Religion, Human Relations, and Union Avoidance in the 1950s: The Electrical Industry's Southern Strategy and Its Limits," *Enterprise and Society* 13 (Mar. 2012): 154–85.

[45] Rev. J. K. McConnell, response to Industrial Chaplain Counselor Questionnaires for Survey Materials sent by Chaplain Charlie Martin, 2 Dec. 1957, box 53, NAE; Burke, "Ordained Christian Minister," 49–52; "More Firms Retain Ministers to Advise, Comfort Employees."

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duties as well as where they fit in the corporate hierarchy, as the following examples illustrate.

The R. G. LeTourneau Company and the John E. Mitchell Company had two of the most evangelically oriented and explicitly antiunion workplace ministries. LeTourneau's industrial chaplaincy program reflected his religious values. Like many conservative evangelicals who believed that the end times were near, LeTourneau's chaplains put an emphasis on salvation and individual redemption and condemned efforts by the government or unions to solve worldly problems.[46] They conducted weekly hour-long evangelical services, distributed religious tracts, visited workers on the shop floor for morale-building chats, counseled individuals, and visited ill, injured, or troubled employees and their families outside the plant. While attendance at services was not mandatory, employees who participated did so on company time. Up to 90 percent "usually or always attended" and the company kept track of the numbers who responded to the chaplain's call for employees to publicly declare for Christ.[47]

The John E. Mitchell Company, a Dallas, Texas, machinery manufacturer, was a small nonunion firm with 350 employees. It offered generous employee benefits and took pride in maintaining harmonious labor-management relations, which it attributed to its religious atmosphere. The company's motto, from Colossians 3:23, hung in every department: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." The company emphasized the notion that "the best and highest motive we can have for happy and useful work is the desire to please God and to make His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our partner in business."[48] Thomas B. Roth, a graduate of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and the Dallas Theological Seminary, served as industrial chaplain. His main job was to help employees adjust to their jobs, fellow workers, and "most of all to [their] God." Roth performed all the tasks that a minister might perform for a church congregation—counseling, leading Bible study, conducting weddings and funerals, helping cope with loss, illness, or financial problems—in addition to mediating employee-employer conflicts. Each Monday morning, Roth led a plant-wide service, featuring singing, prayers, devotionals, discussions of the state of the company's business, and occasional visits from civic and spiritual leaders. Roth envisioned his work as "mostly missionary,"

[46] Hammond, "God's Business Men,'" 47, 15–72.

[47] F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 28–30; R. C. Smith, "Industrial Evangelism," 97; Thielo, "The Industrial Chaplain," 27–28, 90.

[48] F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 44–45.

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observing that it "is imperative that man make a personal decision and trust implicitly in Christ alone for salvation."[49]

While the chaplaincy at D-X Sun Ray Oil Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma, had a religious component, it was primarily an extension of the company's personnel program. In 1948, Sun Ray appointed Charlie Martin to minister to the firm's one thousand employees, hoping that a chaplain might "be of great assistance in keeping down misunderstanding and straightening out difficulties before they become real labor problems." Religion was an important part of Martin's work at Sun Ray. Clad in their grimy work clothes and munching on sandwiches, employees met for the company's weekly noontime Bible study classes where workers participated in prayers and Bible readings and listened to Martin's informal talks on "how to be victorious in their Christian life on the job."[50] Sun Ray appreciated Martin's work as an ally in production, believing that employees who might fear confiding in their supervisor might go to a chaplain. As Martin described it, counseling sessions that dealt with mental, emotional, and "spiritual disorders" helped the company "keep human machinery producing at top efficiency by assisting employees with their personal, as well as company problems."[51]

One of the nation's most well-known industrial chaplains, Clifford Peace, worked for R. J. Reynolds, which operated the largest tobacco manufacturing facility in the world in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In 1949, the company hired Peace as part of a broader effort to regain the loyalty of its workforce. Until 1943, Reynolds had relied on welfare capitalism, repression, and racial divisions to control its workforce. Then, in the midst of the wartime burst of labor activism, Local 22 of the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural, and Allied Workers union won collective bargaining rights for the company's ten thousand workers. During the next five years, a vibrant rank-and-file unionism challenged the company's management and became a force for biracial democracy in the community. Reynolds countered the union by exploiting anticommunism and by intensifying racial divisions within labor's ranks. In 1948 it terminated its collective bargaining agreement with Local 22 and then won a narrow victory over the union in a National Labor Relations

[49] Rev. Tom Roth, reponse to Industrial Chaplain Counselor Questionnaires for Survey Materials, 2 Dec. 1957, box 53, NAE; F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 45–46; Thielo, "The Industrial Chaplain," 25–26.

[50] F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 17–22; John S. Sparks, "Counselor Service Program Helps Workers Do Better Job," *Petroleum Refiner*, June 1954, 218, 221–22; "Novel On-Job Bible Class Big Hit with D-X Workers," *Tulsa Daily World*, 22 Aug. 1952; Charlie Martin, "Industrial Chaplain-Counselor Program," n.d., box 1572, folder 196, JRP.

[51] Charlie Martin, response, in "Industrial Chaplain Counselor Questionnaires for Survey Materials," and Charlie Martin, "Chaplain Counselors Assist Industry," n.d., both box 1572, folder 196, JRP; "Minister Keeps a Plant 'On the Beam,'" *Kansas City Star*, 21 Apr. 1954.

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Board election. Reynolds revived welfare capitalism to win back its employees' allegiances, increasing wages and offering a health plan for workers' families. It also created a personnel office that emphasized "therapeutic" human relations to care for employees' "emotional needs." Reynolds trained all six hundred foremen and supervisors on how to counsel employees on personal problems.[52]

Religion became a part of Reynolds's effort to regain employee loyalty. Company president John Whitaker recognized that many employees were "confused or disturbed most of the time." What they needed, on and off the job, was spiritual therapy. "There are times," said Whitaker, "when people need to be guided into right relations not only with themselves and other people but with God."[53] In 1949, the company gave each employee a subscription to Norman Vincent Peale's *Guideposts*, which emphasized the power of positive thinking, and hired Clifford H. Peace, a forty-year-old Methodist minister, as company pastor-counselor. Peace came with strong qualifications. Raised on a North Carolina tobacco farm, he had worked in Durham tobacco plants to pay his way through college and Duke Divinity School and served as an Air Force chaplain overseas. Although he had no regular preaching duties, Peace asked the company to construct a small chapel adjacent to his office for individual prayer meetings.[54] The company gave Peace wide latitude. The chaplain conceived of the position as one of "applied Christianity in the human relationships of industry and at the workaday level of personal problems"—essentially, "Christianity with its sleeves rolled up." To build the employees' trust, Peace spent much of the first year walking through Reynolds's offices, factories, and warehouses, personally meeting all of the company's twelve thousand workers. Peace encountered troubled workers, like the "haggard youth" who confided, "I'm licked, Preacher, but don't tell my foreman about it. I'm drunk every night of the week."[55]

Over the next six years, Peace counseled more than one-sixth of Reynolds's employees, using a combination of psychology, religious guidance, and prayer, careful to avoid being "moralistic" or "preachy."[56]

[52] Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2003); F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 37; "Yankee-Type Rebels," *Forbes,* 1 Nov. 1952, 17.

[53] Woodbury, "Religion in Industry," 31; Burke, "Ordained Christian Minister," 66.

[54] Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*, 390.

[55] Burke, "Ordained Christian Minister," 70; Clarence Woodbury, "They Put a Parson on the Payroll," *American Magazine*, Jan. 1952, 8; "Yankee-Type Rebels," 17.

[56] F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 40; Burke, "Ordained Christian Minister," 74; Clifford H. Peace, "The Pastoral Counseling Program in R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company," in proceedings of the Conference on Methodism's Ministry to Industry (unpublished transcript), 16–17 Dec. 1957, 73, University of Oregon Library, Eugene.

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Fearful that workers might "suspect him of being an ear of management" or that he might be "caught in an impossible position so far as labor-management relations were concerned," Peace emphasized his independence, even insisting on Reynolds's assurance that he could "follow his conscience when counseling an employee even when his opinion ran counter" to that of the corporation.[57] R. J. Reynolds publicly claimed that it had no ulterior motives in hiring Peace, who also routinely asserted that companies should not hire chaplains just to boost productivity or to "manipulate the power of religion for personal gain." He did believe, however, that a "company which acts from religious motives . . . does reap a material reward as a by-product." Within two years of Peace's employment, labor turnover declined by one-third, the accident rate dropped 40 percent, and absenteeism also declined amid a "wave of spiritual interest."[58]

Constraining the Early Industrial Chaplain Movement

Many companies found that their investment in workplace religion paid off. Industrial chaplains seemed particularly effective at demonstrating a company's concern for its employees and improving morale. For some firms it proved to be just the ticket needed to address workers' higher needs, one of the key goals of human relations. The plant superintendent at Fieldcrest Mills stated, "I am sold on the industrial chaplaincy service. It makes our employees feel that the company has their interest at heart." Not only managers but also production employees sensed the difference. One worker at American Air Filter confided, "I sort of dreaded to come to work every morning; now I look forward to working here because I feel that [chaplain] Ben [Seitz] has an interest in my personal problems. . . . A man just can't do his best when he has problems he can't work out."[59]

Some companies could not help but brag that their chaplain's work led to bottom-line results. At the Jitney Jungle Foods Stores in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the efforts of the chaplain helped end the "wild drinking parties" of employees that had affected their performance on the job. Dearborn Stove Company boasted that "production efficiency zoomed 10% in eleven months" after it added a minister to its staff, and a

[57] Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*, 390–91; "Experiment in Christianity with Its Sleeves Rolled Up," *Journal and Sentinel* (Winston-Salem, N.C.), 19 Aug. 1951; Peace, "Pastoral Counseling Program."

[58] Peace, "Pastoral Counseling Program."

[59] F. K. Smith, "The Industrial Chaplain," 61; Frank H. Heinze, "A Survey of the Industry Chaplaincy Program in the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company," 1956, box 68, HPP; Burke, "Ordained Christian Minister," 53, 62.

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foreman at American Air Filter credited the chaplain's work for reducing accidents and cutting absenteeism in his shop by 50 percent.[60] Fieldcrest Mills discovered that the "attitude of employees throughout the plant is better," and the plant superintendent of American Air Filter praised his chaplain for "helping to establish confidence, cooperation, and faith" in the company. In 1954, the industry journal *Petroleum Refiner* concluded that religious counseling delivered the sort of harmony in employee-management relations that human relations theorists promised.[61]

This kind of boasting about workplace religion aroused suspicions that industrial chaplains were merely tools for undercutting organized labor. Union leaders, like Victor Reuther of the United Auto Workers (UAW), John Ramsay, head of the CIO's Community Relations Department, and O. A. Knight, president of the Oil Workers International Union, pointed out that most chaplains served nonunion firms. Labor found the basic premise of many industrial chaplaincies threatening. While unions sought collective means to address workers' problems, many chaplains "preached a gospel that downplayed group solidarity" and emphasized individual solutions. Indeed, the *Winston-Salem Journal* praised R. J. Reynolds for hiring Clifford Peace, anticipating that he would help demonstrate that "the world cannot be made right by organizations."[62] In 1955, Knight observed that Charlie Martin's work at Sun Ray Oil had caused a "justifiable resentment against religion in the workplace." Oil workers, many of whom were "good Christians," viewed the employer-paid chaplain as nothing more than a "company stooge."[63]

Perhaps no person better embodied the fears that religion might be manipulated to serve private interests than the industrial relations consultant Reverend George D. Heaton. While Heaton did not operate as a conventional industrial chaplain, at times he adopted that role to advance business interests. To him, one of the primary challenges facing management was competition with organized labor for the

[60] Ray C. Newman, response to Industrial Chaplain Counselor Questionnaires for Survey Materials, box 53, NAE; Felton, "Religious Activities in Industry," 274; Burke, "Ordained Christian Minister," 63; Thielo, "The Industrial Chaplain," 36.

[61] Thielo, "The Industrial Chaplain," 42; "Industrial Chaplains: A New Help to Labor Relations," *Time*, 31 Oct. 1955, 84; Burke, "Ordained Christian Minister," 63–64; Sparks, "Counselor Service Program."

[62] Victor Reuther, "Labor Looks at the Church's Ministry to Industry," in proceedings of the Conference on Methodism's Ministry to Industry, 37; "Company Chaplains? They're Company Men!" *Occupational Hazards*, Oct. 1962, 34; O. A. Knight to John G. Ramsay, 28 Jan. 1955, box 1572, folder 197, JRP; Paul R. Christopher to John G. Ramsay, 13 Apr. 1954, box 1572, folder 196, JRP; *Winston-Salem Journal* quoted in Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*, 391.

[63] O. A. Knight to John Ramsay, 17 Jan. 1955, box 1572, folder 197, JRP.

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loyalty of workers.[64] At times, Heaton took on clients during union-organizing campaigns. In 1953, for instance, Magnavox and General Electric, both facing organizing campaigns in new plants—in Greeneville, Tennessee, and Rome, Georgia, respectively—designated Heaton as plant chaplain. Heaton came to the plants several days each month, visiting with employees and helping workers with "their personal problems of all descriptions." But the union charged that he also provided Biblical texts and antiunion leaflets for management and spoke against the union. In July 1954, union organizers contended that Heaton's ability to lend "the hand of religion to company lies, propaganda and false promises" hindered the union drive.[65]

Among unionists Heaton was the poster boy for the problems with the business version of industrial chaplaincy. Even defenders of industrial chaplain programs would have disavowed Heaton's partisanship and his tenuous connections with the workers at the plants he was serving. Heaton's experience as an industrial chaplain symbolized the contradictions that clergy faced when they attempted to serve two masters, the church and business. Labor's staunch opposition to what Heaton represented limited the growth of the industrial chaplain movement in the 1950s, much to the dismay of business. But in an ironic twist, labor's rejection of even the more liberal, union-neutral vision of industrial chaplains, which had support in the National Council of Churches, meant that only the antiunion version survived beyond the 1950s. When industrial chaplains began to resurface in the more conducive evangelical climate of the 1970s, labor could point to no viable alternative.

In the 1950s, mainstream Protestantism also constrained business employment of ministers. While liberal Protestants welcomed innovative ways to reach workers, they identified important flaws in industrial chaplaincies. In early 1954, Marshall L. Scott, head of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations, pointed out that management, "no matter how zealous, cannot shove religion upon employees." Not doubting that the "Christian concern of most management is genuine," Scott warned that company-paid chaplains aroused suspicion "that religion is being used, consciously or unconsciously," to undermine organized

[64] George D. Heaton, speech to Burlington Mills Corporation, Mid-Pines, N.C., 16 Oct. 1954, box 6, folder 20, GHC; George D. Heaton, "A Study in Unionism, Organization and Supervision, Thomasville Chair Company, Thomasville, N.C.," 19 Apr. 1956, box 2, folder 41, GHC.

[65] James E. Greenwood to Roger, 14 July 1954, box 5, folder 28, Publicity Department Records, International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Records, Rutgers University Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.; "Rev. Heaton at Magnavox" (leaflet), n.d., box 6 folder 1, Publicity Department Records; Ed F. Lingo to William Snoots, 27 July 1954, box 1668, folder 60, JRP. See also E. Fones-Wolf and K. Fones-Wolf, "Religion, Human, Relations, and Union Avoidance."

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labor.[66] *Christian Century* was harsher in its evaluation of company-paid chaplains, arguing that the minister might become an "errand boy for bolstering company policy," and that the church "should not condone such prostitution of its ministry."[67]

Between 1955 and 1959, a series of major conferences convened by the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Council of Churches, and the Methodist Church dealt with the problems and future of industrial chaplaincy. The NAE remained intrigued with the industrial chaplaincy's potential for "counseling the spiritual problems of men in industry" and its promise that "men's lives can be set right with God."[68] But practicing chaplains admitted difficulty in overcoming "the worker's inherent suspicion that the chaplain is a tool of management." Several lamented the "lack of full freedom allowed by management to plan the chaplaincy program."[69] When the NAE held its conference on industrial chaplaincy in June 1959, it remained unsure about whether chaplains were ultimately serving business or the church and was unable to move forward confidently.[70]

The National Council of Churches recognized that the church needed to help people meet the problems of their work life and recognized the need for professional counseling but worried that in-plant chaplaincies might undercut workers' relationships with established churches. In 1955, the Council's Consultation on Church and Economic Relations urged that employee-initiated religious meetings be continued, but cautioned against chaplains who "appear to be employed for economic rather than religious reasons."[71] As a result of this kind of resistance from liberals within the National Council of Churches, the business-dominated Religion in Industry Committee was unable to pursue its plan to vigorously promote industrial chaplaincy. Similarly at the 1957 "Methodism's Ministry to Industry" conference, Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam sharply criticized industrial chaplaincy, arguing that it was up

[66] Marshal L. Scott, "The Industrial Chaplain," *The City Church*, Mar.–Apr. 1954, 3–4.

[67] Clair M. Cook, "The Industrial Chaplain," *Christian Century*, 31 Aug. 1953, 993; "On Industrial Chaplains," *Religion and Labor*, Feb. 1957, 8.

[68] James Broyhill to Neil Winegarden, 12 Nov. 1957, and Donald H. Gill to George Ford, 28 Dec. 1959, both box 53, NAE.

[69] Chaplain Raymond A. Brooks and Rev. Tom Roth, responses to Industrial Chaplain Counselor Questionnaires for Survey Materials sent by Chaplain Charlie Martin, 2 Dec. 1957, box 53, NAE.

[70] Report of the Conference on Industrial Chaplaincies, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 19 and 20 June 1959, and Donald H. Gill to Charlie Martin, 8 Apr. 1960, both box 53, NAE.

[71] "Consultation on the Church and Labor-Management Relations, Report of Group III, Haverford, Pennsylvania, 16–19 June 1955" (typescript), box 1926, folder 11, AFL-CIO Papers, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; "Consultation on the Ministry of the Churches to Labor and Management, Columbus, Ohio, 23–26 Apr. 1958, Department of Church and Economic Life, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A." (typescript), box 1572, folder 197, JRP.

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to the church, not labor or management, to provide a Christian ministry for industrial workers.[72]

Conclusion

Early postwar predictions that industrial chaplaincy would spread rapidly through American industry did not come to fruition. Faced with opposition from organized labor and elements of the church, it failed to expand much beyond the South. If the prognosis in the late fifties for the future of industrial chaplaincy was bleak, the last four decades might represent delayed gratification for its advocates. Beginning in the 1970s, there has been dramatic growth in evangelicalism and the promotion of Christian free enterprise by such powerful corporate entities as Walmart. The United States has witnessed a renewed interest in industrial chaplains as employers have rediscovered the benefits of faith-based workplace programs. A 2008 survey of 543 employers found that 15 percent provided space for prayer or religious practices and 9 percent permitted religious groups to meet at the workplace. Industry groups estimate that there are over four thousand workplace chaplains, provided by companies like Marketplace Ministries and Corporate Chaplains of America. They buttress a renewed effort on the part of management to encourage individualistic and spiritual alternatives to collective action in an unstable economic climate, especially since there is no strong labor movement to object.[73]

Few of the workplace chaplains of today know much about the origins of their particular calling. The notion emerged out of World War II and owed a great deal to the contributions of military chaplains and to developments in England, but it was also a response to wartime dislocations of the working class and the tumultuous impact that the Depression and the war had on the workplace. Equally important given the procompany orientation of today's shop-floor ministries, industrial chaplain programs did not emerge solely in the minds of employers; religious groups and labor unions also saw potential benefits

[72] "Oxnam Deplores Plant Chaplains," *New York Times*, 17 Dec. 1957; "Industry-Paid Clergymen Taboo," *New Era*, 16 Jan. 1958; Leon Hickman, "Management Looks at the Church's Ministry to Industry," in proceedings of the Conference on Methodism's Ministry to Industry, 48; Leon E. Hickman, "The Ministry to Industry," *Zion's Herald*, Jan. 1958, 27.

[73] On the growth of Christian-oriented businesses over the past two decades and of corporate chaplaincy, see David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (New York, 2007), 105–23; Lowell F. Sodeman, *Industrial Chaplaincy* (Atlanta, 1982); Robert E. Eades, "The National Institute of Business and Industrial Chaplains," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 42 (Fall 1988): 245–51; "Ministers Who Work among Their Flock," *New York Times*, 3 Oct. 1996; Kerry Hall, "In a Time of Change, Tyson Turns to Faith," *Charlotte Observer*, 8 Jan. 2006; Sue Shellenbarger, "Praying with the Office Chaplain," *Wall Street Journal*, 23 June 2010.

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in bringing ministers to the workplace. But the influence of organized labor actually smothered more union-neutral versions of industrial chaplains. Worried about the potential benefits that might accrue to management and unwilling to provide resources to liberal efforts, the labor movement not only did not offer a counter to employer-controlled programs, but also used its influence to prevent liberal church groups like the National Council of Churches from exploring alternatives. As union influence shrank in the 1970s, the only existing model for industrial chaplain programs emphasized Christian free enterprise and individualistic salvation.

Although the postwar industrial chaplain movement fell far short of the optimistic forecasts for its potential to reshape labor-management relations, it nevertheless helps illuminate a number of postwar business trends. First, it supplements insights concerning the persistence of a paternalistic strain in managerial thinking. Religion, particularly Protestantism, was a core component of nineteenth-century paternalism and twentieth-century welfare capitalism, and it remained a useful legitimizing notion for what Sanford Jacoby referred to as "modern manors." Second, industrial chaplain programs demonstrate that business was thinking not just about politics when it turned to the sacred. As firms made decisions about decentralizing or relocating production facilities, they looked for places where they could lower labor costs and develop a more tractable workforce. Such were the benefits offered by the South and Southwest, where the religious makeup of prospective communities was a key factor in management's calculus, especially due to religion's postwar expansion. Business leaders demonstrated that they understood this when they sought to manipulate religious beliefs at the first signs of union activity. Finally, the industrial chaplain movement underscores what historians have been asserting over the past two decades, namely, that business continued to search for ways to escape the postwar labor-management accord that supposedly governed the American workplace.

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